

Book Reviews

John MacQueen (ed.), *Humanism in Renaissance Scotland*.
Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1990. Pp. viii + 199.

A comprehensive history of the Renaissance in Scotland has yet to be written. In its absence, the present collection of essays contributed by eleven scholars, under Professor John MacQueen's editorship, on aspects of Renaissance humanism is greatly to be welcomed in extending our understanding of the cultural achievements not just in art and music but in thought and scholarship unfolded by the Renaissance. The humanists' dedication to classical studies and the culture of the ancient world entailed no single philosophical system but rather a heterogeneity of thought and expression. Dr Schoeck's introduction on the European background serves as a reminder that "Aristotelianism existed side by side with Platonism, neo-Stoicism and neo-Epicureanism" and scholasticism could still be found lingering in the universities.

Humanism's cultural and religious programme also called for the writing of verse, drama, and historical and critical prose written for a scholarly readership in neo-Latin, emulating the eloquence of Cicero (where George Buchanan so excelled), in place of medieval scholastic Latin still favoured by the circle of John Major. But there was also a need for vernacular literature suited for a courtly or wider readership, and, in a richly illustrated account, Professor MacQueen explores the ways in which humanist writers adapted classical material to vernacular purposes or standards. Douglas, Lindsay, Boece, Bellenden, and Buchanan are duly appraised, and Bishop Brown of Dunkeld is revealed as a humanist whose concerns extended beyond a reform of administration and worship in his diocese to embrace local history, biography, architecture and libraries.

In a fascinating chapter, with accompanying plates, Professor Martin Kemp, with assistance from Clare Farrow, traces the thread of humanism in the visual arts but is curiously silent on ecclesiastical art (apart from mention of an Italian cameo of the Crucifixion). Legal studies receive attention from J. W. Cairns, T. D. Fergus and Hector MacQueen to show how the humanist skills, developed on the continent in the study of Roman law, were most successfully applied to Scots law. Some unevenness of treatment is possibly a consequence of three co-authors. Quite how, and where, aspiring lawyers gained their training is unexplored, leaving the editor in his conclusion to remark that "the services of a continental university remained essential". This is very largely true, but some aspirants lacking formal training in the laws were able to serve a legal

apprenticeship and gain practical knowledge as observers in the courts (*Edinburgh University Library 1580-1980*, ed. J. R. Guild and A. Law, 27-28). Dr Broadie profitably explores central developments in philosophy from the late scholastic logic associated with Major's circle and illustrates Thomas Reid's indebtedness in the eighteenth century to theories devised by the group associated with Major. At times, technicalities make the discussion difficult for a non-logician to follow. Alexander Keller's treatment of medical and scientific advances is absorbing reading; here the study of anatomy (which ultimately was to challenge the authority of the ancients) could have been illustrated from Rollock's pioneering classes in human anatomy at Edinburgh.

For church historians, two chapters on education and religion are particularly important. The church's long association with education is well attested, and in a remarkable contribution Dr John Durkan finds little evidence to sustain the claim that the universities formed an élite with no popular base. The significance of Dr Durkan's study lies less in his summary of familiar trends within the universities than in his pioneering discussion of grammar teaching in the schools. Dr Durkan's exceptional dedication in eliciting the early existence of schoolmasters (from manuscript sources of formidable dimensions) allows him to conclude that a "system of popular education for schools existed everywhere in Scotland by 1633", and, as the author shows, "credit must go largely to the Kirk". One slip occurs on p. 137 where "Ross's history" must surely read "Row's"; and "Aristotelian" becomes "Aristotelean" on p. 153.

Professor J. K. Cameron provides an authoritative and rewarding account of humanism and religious life. Elements of Erasmian and Fabrisian humanism are detected in the work of the provincial councils of the pre-Reformation church (which avoid mention of the biblical tongues), and in the Catechism authorised by Archbishop Hamilton. The contributions of Elphinstone in Aberdeen, Beaton, Hamilton and Hay in St Andrews, Ferrerio at Kinloss and Reid of Orkney are carefully reviewed, and the rôle of Lindsay's satirical attacks on ecclesiastical abuse is assessed. All were leading Catholic humanists, and the extent to which humanist values were espoused at lower levels might also have been demonstrated in the remarkable career of Clement Little, worth citing as an Erasmian humanist, advocate, protestant elder, benefactor and proponent (as much as Bishop Reid) of a university college for Edinburgh. Professor Cameron draws attention, too, to Knox's report, "no doubt with exaggeration" that John Hamilton and David Panter, afterwards elevated to the episcopate, were thought likely to become protestant preachers in 1543. It might be

added, in support of Knox's claim, that Hamilton was considered to have protestant leanings in France in 1541 and, indeed, suspicion of his sympathy for the new religious opinions was reiterated in 1546. Again, Panter's close kinsman was Norman Leslie, one of Beaton's main assassins, and Panter himself, who is said to have helped the "castilians", was considered contaminated with the new doctrines in 1546. As Professor Cameron judiciously observes, "that the Reformation came about with comparatively little dislocation was no doubt in part due to the extent to which humanist reforming ideas had impressed leading academics and clergy". Thereafter, "Calvinism played a decisive rôle in Scotland's educational programme". All in all, the humanists' rôle in religious life essentially lay in reforming the medieval church, in securing for the reformed church a firm basis in a revitalised educational programme and in providing the necessary biblical and theological scholars.

This highly successful volume significantly enriches our knowledge of Renaissance Scotland.

JAMES KIRK
University of Glasgow

James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform: Continuity and Change in the Reformation Kirk*.

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1989. Pp. xx + 516. £24.95.

Dr Kirk is a master of the art of the extended essay; he sets out to deal with a particular theme, amasses and weighs the evidence, presents and assesses the views of other scholars, and then draws his conclusions which are usually original, illuminating and convincing. Each chapter in this book is such an essay. There is the added value that together they provide a fresh panoramic view of the Church of Scotland in the half century after the Reformation in 1560.

The first essay shows how seeds of Protestantism were planted in Scotland in "Privy Kirks" and how these kirks "surfaced to assume the rôle of parish churches".

The second essay illustrates church life in Edinburgh, particularly through the life of one of its citizens, Clement Little, who was an advocate, a humanist, a Protestant, an elder in the Reformed Kirk, a philanthropist, an educationalist and a benefactor of the University Library.

The third essay deals with the percolation of Calvinist thought into Scotland and gives fascinating glimpses of those who brought and spread these ideas.

